Madison Dolecki

EDC 102

Ch. 5 Reflection

Prior to reading this chapter, I had not given much thought to the different ways classrooms, teachers and students work together and how different philosophies have an impact on that. As stated multiple times before, I feel that my reflection and thoughts on these philosophies and classroom ideas vary from most other students, as I did not have any experience other than being homeschooled until I went to public school in eighth grade. My feelings on schooling however are not reflected in the way that students are currently being taught in terms of teaching to the test and focusing on the group of students rather than each as their own individual with different learning habits.

The philosophy that really stuck out to me in terms of matching my feelings about schooling was humanism. More specifically, the line in the text which reads “the teacher who follows humanistic theory emphasizes instruction and assessment based on student interests, abilities, and needs” (pg. 114). Not only can I relate this to my experience being homeschooled, I can also incorporate this into my current views on education. This sentence alone made me really think about how little education today focuses on individuals, especially in terms of standardized testing and core curriculums. Humanism respects individuality and gives freedom for students who learn best by reading to learn that way and students who learn best by listening to learn that way. As someone who has trouble learning in lecture settings, I was only exposed to this notion when I transferred into the public school system. Prior to that, homeschooling had followed more of a humanistic approach by allowing me to be seen as an individual in need of growing and also understanding that a large portion of learning depends on the environment.

Another school of thought which in my opinion works hand in hand with humanism, is constructivism. As I see certain children I know such as family members, family friends, struggle with the set in stone ways of learning that begin the minute they enter public schools, the more I realize that I do not agree with it. Constructivism focuses on students developing their own ideas and feelings through hands-on activities. Relating to my own personal feelings on the way children should learn, the passage “... educators should invite students to experience the world’s richness and empower them to ask their own questions and seek their own answers” (pg. 117) helps to explain my views. In my opinion, schooling has become too classroom based and does not allow students to learn from nature or daily life lessons. While I do not feel that being homeschooled put me a step up from those who went through the public school system, I do feel I was exposed to many different life experiences I otherwise would not have been. Constructivism is so vital to me in the way that it removes the importance of memorizing facts and places emphasis on understanding greater life ideas.

To understand how these two concepts differ from others in the chapter, it is necessary to look briefly at the idea of positivism. Positivism focuses heavily on observable facts and puts aside the need for students to explore and experience. With that in mind, the focus of positivism is in clear expectations and curriculum based learning. While it is necessary to have some form of making sure students have mastered necessary concepts to becoming valuable individuals, it is also vital that children learn some of who they are and about the world through experience.

The philosophies of humanism and constructivism are so powerful and could have such a positive impact on schooling if the focus could be shifted from memorizing and teaching to the test to a more hands-on, free approach. My feelings on schooling may differ because of my educational background, but it is hard to understand why learning has become to fact and test based, rather than a combination of multiple different teaching/learning strategies. In order to see the most amount of student succeed, schools would benefit greatly from incorporating ideas from humanism as well as constructivism. There needs to be a greater balance of these different ideas incorporated into the schooling systems to produce more well-rounded individuals, rather than students who can tell you about volcanoes but not know how to balance a checkbook.